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MSHA's Joseph Main updates Steelworkers on progress in mine safety, health *Enhanced worker voice protections among major initiatives*

ARLINGTON, Va. – In meetings today with the [United Steelworkers of America](#) at its headquarters in Pittsburgh, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health Joseph A. Main updated union members on recent actions taken by the Mine Safety and Health Administration to improve mine safety and health. The USW is the largest industrial union in North America, and it represents workers from a number of industries, including metals and mining.

“The progress made by MSHA and the mining industry as a whole have shown that greater improvements are achievable,” said Main.

Among the initiatives launched by the agency in the past year that Main discussed was the development of a comprehensive [miners' representative handbook](#) and [Web-based training course](#). The handbook is available electronically and in hard copy.

The agency has enhanced the education and training and investigative components of its [workers' rights program](#), held outreach meetings to present information on miners' rights and distributed resource materials throughout the mining industry. In 2013, 45 discrimination cases were filed with MSHA, the most ever, along with 26 temporary reinstatement cases, the second highest number on record.

In his remarks, Main stated that mine safety has been on a steady path of improvement since the agency began implementing reforms, characterized by a reduction in the number of chronic violators and better compliance with mine safety and health standards. Most importantly, during this period, the industry achieved the lowest fatality and injury rates in the history of mining in 2011 and again in 2012, a trend that continued through FY 2013.

Main also noted that, in the past year, MSHA has:

- [completed dozens of actions](#) based on recommendations identified by the [internal review of the 2010 Upper Big Branch mine disaster](#);
- implemented [new criteria for mine rescue team certification](#);
- reformed coal, metal and nonmetal mine rescue [training contests](#);
- significantly reduced the backlog of cases pending before the [Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission](#) and
- improved overall consistency in enforcement activities.

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